

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for storing data comprising the step of storing first information with first data, wherein the first information directly indicates the status of the first data.

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2. The method of claim 1 wherein the status indicates a reliability of the first data.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein the first information is a data reliability qualifier bit.

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4. The method of claim 3 wherein the first information is embedded with the first data.

5. The method of claim 1 wherein the first information is appended with the first data.

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6. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of storing second information with second data, the second information indicating the status of the first data.

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7. The method of claim 6 wherein the second information is set to indicate that the first data is unreliable.

8. A method for protecting data comprising the step of accompanying first information with first data, wherein the first information indicates status of second data associated with the first data.

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9. The method of claim 8 wherein the status indicates a reliability of the second data.

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10. The method of claim 1 wherein the first information is a data reliability qualifier.

11. The method of claim 10 wherein the first data is parity data.

12. The method of claim 8 wherein the first information is set to  
5 indicate that the second data is unreliable.

13. The method of claim 8 further comprising the step of storing second  
information to the second data, the second information indicating the status of the  
second data.

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14. The method of claim 13 wherein the second information is set to  
indicate that the second data is unreliable.

15. An apparatus comprising:  
15 storage areas; and  
circuitry configured to perform at least one of a group consisting of a  
reading and a writing of the storage areas, wherein at least one of the storage areas  
includes first information accompanying first data, wherein the first information  
indicates status of second data associated with the first data.

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16. The apparatus of claim 15 wherein the circuitry includes a  
controller that is adapted to store the first information with the first data.

17. The apparatus of claim 15 wherein at least another of the storage  
25 areas includes second information stored with the second data that indicates a  
status of the second data.

18. The apparatus of claim 17 wherein the storage areas are in a RAID  
configuration.

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19. The apparatus of claim 15 wherein the first information is appended  
to the first data.

20. The apparatus of claim 15 wherein the first information is embedded in the first data.

21. The apparatus of claim 15 wherein the first information and the first  
5 data are generated by the same function.